

## Reflection for 7<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter Year B

Under this heading we must examine the mental attitude which the Catholic Church must adopt regarding the contemporary world. What contacts ought it to make at the present time with human society? - seeing that the Church's ever-increasing self-awareness and its struggle to model itself on Christ's ideal can only result in its acting and thinking quite differently from the world around it, which it is nevertheless striving to influence.

The Gospel clearly warns us of this difference and the need to keep ourselves distinct from the world. By the world, here, is meant either those human beings who are opposed to the light of faith and the gift of grace, those whose naive optimism betrays them into thinking that their own energies suffice to win them complete, lasting, and gainful prosperity, or, finally, those who take refuge in an aggressively pessimistic outlook on life and maintain that their vices, weaknesses and moral ailments are inevitable, incurable, or perhaps even desirable as sure manifestations of personal freedom and sincerity. The Gospel of Christ recognizes the existence of human infirmities. It recognizes and denounces them with penetrating and often fierce sincerity. Yet it also understands them and cures them. It does not cherish the illusion that man is naturally good and self-sufficient and needs only the ability to express himself as he pleases. Nor does it countenance a despairing acquiescence in the irremedial corruption of human nature. Christ's Gospel is light, newness, strength, salvation, and rebirth. It brings to birth a new and different kind of life, the marvels of which are proclaimed in the pages of the New Testament. Hence the admonition which St. Paul gives: "Do not be conformed to this world, but be reformed in the newness of your mind, that you may prove what is the good and the acceptable and the perfect will of God."

This difference between the Christian and the worldly life also arises from the fact that we are conscious of having been truly justified. Justification is produced in us by our sharing in the paschal mystery, particularly in Baptism, which is truly a rebirth, as St. Paul teaches: "All who are baptized in Christ Jesus are baptized in his death. For we are buried together with him by baptism into death: that as Christ is risen from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also may walk in newness of life."

The modern Christian will do well, therefore, to reflect on this special and marvelous kind of life. He will thus be enabled to rejoice in the dignity that is his, to avoid the plague of human wretchedness which is everywhere around him, and to escape the seduction of human glory.

The Apostle of the Gentiles had this to say to the Christian of his day: "Bear not the yoke with unbelievers. For what participation hath justice with injustice? Or what fellowship hath light with darkness? . . . Or what part hath the faithful with the unbeliever?" Hence the duty of modern educators and teachers in the Church of reminding young Catholics of their privileged position and of their obligation to live in the world, but not as the world lives. As Jesus Christ said in His prayer for His apostles: "I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from evil. They are not of the world, as I also am not of the world." Church makes this prayer its own.

The fact that we are distinct from the world does not mean that we are entirely separated from it. Nor does it mean that we are indifferent to it, afraid of it, or contemptuous of it. When the Church distinguishes itself from humanity, it does so not in order to oppose it, but to come closer to it. A physician who realizes the danger of disease, protects himself and others from it, but at the same time he strives to cure those who have contracted it. The Church does the same thing. It does not regard God's mercy as an exclusive privilege, nor does the greatness of the privilege it enjoys make it feel unconcerned for those who do not share it. On the contrary, it finds in its own salvation an argument for showing more concern and more love for those who live close at hand, or to whom it can go in its endeavour to make all alike share the blessing of salvation.